

Disclaimer: The Sentinel and Pretender characters are owned by mean people who do not really want them. If you agree, honk. I am a loving person so that means they are not mine.

Note: Huge thank you to Bonnie for betaing this for me, otherwise you would not have been able to read it in peace. Any sequel is up to the readers if I get enough encouragement. Thank you to Mouse for all the talks and keeping me up to date with the most important world out there, the net world. This is my second crossover I have posted and the next one is a EFC crossover if I ever get around to typing it up.

The Center

By [Sentarla](#)

The sound of someone highly agitated and nearly running to the loft door put Jim instantly on alert. Quickly going to the door, Jim pulled it open, ready for anything -- well anything except the red headed whirlwind that swept past him into the quiet loft.

"Where's Blair? Jim, where's Blair?"

Not waiting for an answer from the astounded man, Naomi rushed past him, into Sandburg's room. Within seconds, she rushed back out to Jim. The shock having worn off, Jim shut the door and now looked at the young, well aged woman in front of him. Taking a deep breath, she tried to calm herself a little.

"Jim, I need to find Blair, where is he? I checked the U and they said it was his day off."

Nodding his head, Jim looked into the wild brown eyes, so unlike those of his partner's.

"He went down to the shops, the guys are coming over and we needed supplies."

Jim stopped Naomi before she took flight again and told her to sit down.

"It will be quicker if you wait here, Blair should be back in five to ten minutes, and if you leave now, you may miss him. If it is that important, wait."

Not having much choice with Jim blocking the doorway, Naomi sat down at the kitchen table to wait. Less than a minute later, she was up again, pacing, ready to bolt out the door.

Jim was starting to get annoyed. Naomi's behaviour was sending his senses nuts. Everything was heightened, as if ready for an attack.

"Naomi, please, what is wrong? Are you in trouble? Is someone after you?"

Naomi stood still, her eyes wide and startled. Jim nodded; at least he had a starting place. Before he could probe further he heard the comical sound of Blair's singing as he made his way towards the loft door.

The first thing Blair saw was Jim's face, the look of a Sentinel on full alert. A sudden, intense feeling of fear washed over Blair; he could

barely control the urge to turn and run back to the elevator. Locking eyes with Jim, Blair took a deep breath and entered his home. Seeing his mother standing near the kitchen table, Blair put down the box of groceries and went to hug her. Blair's approach broke Naomi from her spell, and he gave a muffled "oomph" as she crushed him to her; then just as suddenly she pushed him away and started to drag him to his room.

"Blair, quick, you have to grab your sack. We have to go, quick, Blair, there's not much time." Sending a pleading look to his roommate, Blair tried to resist her strong pull.

"Blair, honey, we don't have time, we have to go! They know you're here."

Standing firm, Blair shook his head. "No, stop, who are 'they' Naomi, what's wrong?"

Throwing her hands up, Naomi went into Blair's room and tore through his closet until she found Blair's emergency backpack. Becoming even more worried, Jim stood beside his smaller partner and stopped Naomi's hand as it went to grab Blair's arm again.

"That's enough, Naomi, either tell us what's going on, or leave. Blair is not going anywhere."

Looking into the intense blue eyes of her son's roommate, Naomi sighed and sank to her knees in Blair's doorway.

"Please -- there's no time. There are some really, really evil people after Blair, and they now know where he lives. If we don't go now, they will take him, and ..." Choking back a cry, Naomi could not continue.

"Who, and why now?" Blair asked, both totally mystified and a little worried.

"Ohh baby, I am so sorry. I'd hoped this day would never come."

Turning sad eyes on Jim for a few moments, Naomi looked back at Blair and held her arms out. Without a thought, Blair sat down beside his mother and leaned in for a hug.

"I know this will be a shock, but I'm not your real mother. You were given to me for protection. You are special, very special and there are some really bad people who belong to a group called the Center. They find and take special children and use them for experiments. When you were four, they came for you. Your people gave you to me and we fled. I was told to protect you and teach you about the world. I was warned to never let you stay in one place too long. I knew when you stayed in Cascade that is was dangerous, but I hoped they had forgotten about you. When your story hit the news about what happen at the University and the fountain, I knew it would only be a matter of time before they came looking for you again. Two nights ago I was told by a friend that they, the Center, still wanted you and were coming. He told me he could only stall them for a few days."

Not sure how to take this new discovery that had rocked his once solid world, Blair held tighter to the person he had believed to be his mother and looked to Jim for help.

Knowing Blair was incapable of asking the questions that were needed, Jim got Naomi's attention and asked them himself.

"Why is the Center after Blair? Why is he considered so special?"

Looking at the bundle of confused energy in her arms, Naomi's eyes took on a glazed look as she looked inside herself and tried to explain.

"I was a young doctor, touring the African continent for relief efforts. I was working in a small village on the border of a large uncharted jungle when I was approached by a small child. The child spoke perfect English and his dark skin was beautiful. He told me that their Monku needed me. I had never heard that word before, and I had always been able to pick up the local language and dialects easily where ever I was. I went with the young child into the Jungle. I was frightened, but I was told that the Monku was protecting me and not to be afraid.

After about two hours of hiking and changing directions every five minutes, I was tired, loss and starting to worry for my safety. I had seen many wild animals on my trek, but they all seemed to back away from us when we approached. It was like the young boy had said, we were protected.

As if a magical curtain had been withdrawn, a small village suddenly appeared in front of me.

Once I entered the village I had this sudden feeling of peace wash over me. It was a feeling of Nevada. There were children playing and laughing, women working and what surprised me the most, was the men working beside the women, as a team. My guide became more excited and half dragged me towards the large leaf hut in the center of the village. Thinking there must be someone hurt, I followed him into the dim hut.

Inside was a child, the Monku. He was not sick, in fact, he was the complete opposite. There was a glow of health that seemed to surround the child. My first thought was 'where are the parents?' Unlike everyone else in the village, the child had beautiful blue eyes, pure white skin and curly sandy brown hair. He looked at me and beckoned me closer. There were four large fierce warriors with spears standing guard over him, and a large rumbling purr could be heard from a dark corner of the hut. I was unable to see what was making the noise.

"Please, do not be afraid; welcome. I need your help. I wish I could stay and tell you more, but I feel so tired. Your trip took a lot out of me." With a small, childish wave, the boy nodded to his protectors and went into the dark corner.

As soon as he left my sight, the rumbling noise increased tenfold and the four warriors did not even flinch. One of the warriors looked at the others and nodded; turning back to me, she silently led me out of the large hut and towards another slightly smaller one next to the center one.

An old man was inside and he greeted me with much noise. He talked and gestured with his hands. I sat down at his indication and finished some water and fruit that he offered. Once we had eaten, he told me about the Monku. The story had been handed down over thousands of years to each generation.

"It was told that a child would be born to the tribe, his skin as white as elephant tusks, his eyes as blue as the sky and his hair curly and the colour of wild tree honey. He would be named the Monku, which means the next Shaman of the Great Village. He would be able to talk to and control animals, hear what you say before you say it and know what you are feeling. He could calm the angriest heart and bring peace to ones who had moved to the next life.

The Monku would be born wise, knowing more than any other person in the tribe. He would live and grow in the tribe until a black panther appeared.

With the panther's help, the Monku will call to the village a stranger with fiery red hair. The medicine woman, would take the Monku into her world and protect him until she sees the man who walks with the panther. There are many enemies, but none as dangerous as the soul catchers. They take the children gifted by the spirits and drain them of their gifts. The Monku will never be safe until he meets his full protector. When that time comes, the Monku will release his gifts and together they will protect the great village.

When the Monku was born, we knew our tribe had been blessed. His mother died after he was born and the father two days later while out hunting. Monku is a child of the tribe, none own him, but all love and care for him. When we saw the panther, many cried. We all knew that you would be arriving and Monku leaving. For the last four years our tribe has been blessed. We have never know hunger or been made to suffer by the Gods. Our village has been protected by both man and beast. The Monku, having the wisdom of the ages, taught us how to speak the white man's language and what to expect when white man comes.

The prophecies of the Monku tells us that once he leaves the village he will lose all the wisdom of the ages. There will be a group who will do anything to possess him. Once he leaves the village a message like a great flock of birds will be sent through the world announcing his presence to anyone who will listen. The evil people will search for him. They know that if they can trap the Monku, they will have total control of the Great Village. It has been said that the Great Village is the key to the world's survival in the distant future. Once the spirits believe it is right, the Monku will meet his life protector, who will also be the other half of his soul. It will be at this time your duty will be completed and you will be allowed to return to the life you had previously with the

Monku's blessing. Rest now, medicine woman, you will have a hard road ahead of you tomorrow, but for tonight you are safe."

Drawing in a deep breath, Naomi hugged the wide-eyed Sandburg to her and looked up to Jim.

"I didn't believe it all at first, I was a woman of science; but the next day, when we left, the little four-year-old boy was just like any other of his age. The intelligent spark that I had seen blazing from his young eyes had all but disappeared. When we reached the end of the jungle a large black panther appeared in front of us. I tried to hold onto the young child, but he squirmed out of my arms. He went straight up to the large creature without any hesitation and touched it. The animal moved away and flung back its mighty head and roared. The next thing I knew I was standing on the side of the street in downtown Cascade, Washington with a bundle of food at my feet and a four-year-old child."

Shaking her head, Naomi continued. "I knew then it was all real. I found a few hundred dollars in my pocket and some clothes for the child. I knew the name Monku would stand out, so I called him Blair. We moved from town to town, never staying for too long in one place. It was on Blair's sixth birthday that we first ran into trouble. For the last two months we had been staying in a place called Delawear, a nice small town with lots of work.

Blair had been attending the local school. I lied about his age so it did not seem strange that he was smart enough to be in two grades higher than his age. One night after finishing work at the local diner, I heard a cat roar, just like the one I had heard two years before when we left the jungle. I looked around and noticed two men in suits watching me. I rushed to the house I was renting, but Blair was not there. The apartment had been trashed with nothing noticeably stolen. I picked up our backpacks, threw some essentials into them and started to panic. Suddenly a black panther appeared in front of me and glared. I knew it wanted me to follow, so with the panther's help, I carefully avoided the men watching me and followed the animal to a small park where I found Blair up a tree, asleep. I had heard rumors about a place called

the Center that owned this town, but I had had no idea that they were really the ones after the Monku until I read the letter that Blair clutched in his small hand. It was from a Mrs. Parker, and she told me to get away. The Center was after Blair and would stop at nothing to acquire him. Mrs. Parker said there were other special children at the center and she was trying her best to free them. I asked Blair where he had gotten the note, and he told me it was from a kind dark-haired lady. With the panther as our constant companion and guide, we got out of Delawear that night and traveled east until the panther left.

I have been trying to protect Blair ever since. Until I got this latest note, I had thought Blair was safe..." When Naomi trailed off, Jim softly spoke.

"Who contacted you?"

Moving one arm from around Blair, Naomi reached into a pocket and withdrew a small piece of crumpled paper which was decorated with smiley faces.

"I got this letter two days ago. The person who wrote it, Jarod, said that he was one of the children that the Center had stolen and he had heard about Blair. Jarod said that although he had escaped, he still has some contacts on the inside. He heard that Blair had been tracked to Cascade and that a special retrieval team were going to be sent to get him. Jarod said he would play decoy for a few days, allowing Blair time to get away. He did not want anyone to go through what he went through."

Handing Jim the note, Naomi looked at the larger man and used her eyes to implore him to help.

"Please, Jim, you have to understand; I love Blair, I raised him as my son, but more than that, I have a greater responsibility, the protection of the Monku. That's why we have to leave. Please!"

Handing the note back to the woman on the floor, Jim stood tall and unmoving with a fierce expression on his face.

"No one is going to harm Blair. "And as if to add power to the statement, Jim's spirit guide, the panther, appeared beside him and roared its approval.

Clutching Blair to her, Naomi looked at the large cat sitting at Jim's feet and then back up to Jim, so many questions in her shocked gaze. Reaching up and taking his mother's face in his hands, Blair brought her attention back to him.

"You see, Naomi, I'm safe now. Jim is my protector, the man who walks with the panther. The panther is Jim's spirit guide; there is no need to run. This needs to end now."

Nodding his head, Jim added his voice to that of his guide's. "I will protect Blair Sandburg with my life, Naomi, Monku or not."

Fin

Authors note: Depending on how people react to the story, there may or may not be a sequel. What do you think?